



MUMBAI

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

As we celebrate International Literacy Day on September 8, 2006, we cannot fail to recognize that literacy continues to be unevenly distributed within and between societies. As a result, the rewards of literacy are unavailable to hundreds of millions of people for whom full civic participation remains not merely a distant dream but perhaps an unimaginable one. This situation is all the more intolerable because the technology, expertise, experience and resources to build a literate world are available today. The scale and complexity of the task of achieving literacy for all are certainly daunting. There is too much at stake, however, to allow ourselves to become dispirited. We must actively cultivate and strengthen the resolve, commitment and solidarity necessary for fulfilling this vital task, confident in the knowledge that we will thereby change the world for the better.

In this issue, we have focused on family, health and adult literacy, all of which play a significant role in alleviating poverty and in building a stronger civil society. As the adage goes, "charity begins at home," it is just as true when we say that "learning begins with the family."

What is Family Literacy?

Family literacy is a term used to describe parents and children – or more broadly – adults and children – learning together. Also known as intergenerational literacy, and, in some cases, community literacy, the concept emphasizes that parents (and adults in communities) are children's first teachers; that much learning occurs beyond traditional school settings, and that learning is a lifelong process.

Family literacy can describe the way parents, family and community members use literacy at home and in their communities. Literacy activity occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children get things done; it isn't confined to school-like activities. Although family literacy traditionally takes place within the family, literacy activities and programs can be initiated by outside organizations.

One phrase that is often used to describe the importance of family literacy is "break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy." Intergenerational illiteracy and poverty cannot be broken until the family as a whole begins to learn and realize the importance of education.

Family literacy programs are driven by comprehensive,

holistic approaches to education in which parents and children learn and grow together. Family literacy programs recognize the reciprocal nature of parent-child relationships. Programs provide both parent-initiated as well as child-initiated activities to support development of those relationships and to increase the motivation to learn for both parent and child.

Education opportunities for families are improved by integrating early childhood and adult education into unified programs.

Family literacy programs provide services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration to make sustainable changes in a family, and that also integrate all of the following:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children
- Education for parents in facilitating children's learning and becoming full partners in their education
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency and meets adults' stated goals
- Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and in life

What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy is the ability to understand, access and use health-related tools and services available in a given location. Some people may think of health literacy as simply the ability to decode health-related text. However, this is a narrow definition. Rather, health literacy has to do with the social and cultural practices that individuals and groups may engage in, in the process of understanding, accessing and using health-related tools and services.

Health literacy is contextual and dependent on the location of individuals in a community, or the space they occupy. Social status, age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, geographical space, and number of children, all affect health literacy. Given below are some examples of health literacy situations and practices:

- A child may need to distinguish between a tube of toothpaste and one of hemorrhoidal cream, or between a toothbrush, a nailbrush, and a brass brush
- A mother may need to read a medicine bottle and understand indications and counter-indications

(Continued on page 2)

American Center Bulletin

SEPTEMBER

2006

The American Center
4 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020
Tel: 2262-4590; Fax: 2262-4595
E-mail: MumbaiPublicAffairs@state.gov
Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(Monday through Friday)

HOLIDAYS

September 4: Labor Day

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

It is my privilege to join you, the American Center of Mumbai community. I refer to the American Center in a broad sense – not a building, nor the books, Internet connections, programs, nor even the staff members. Rather, I think of the American Center as the sum of dialogues and interactions among people from all walks of life, each bringing his or her experiences from homes and communities in small and large cities across India, the United States, and other countries. Despite our diverse languages and experiences, we share a curiosity and, studying or just conversing in our free time, we grow from each other's insights and wisdom. I look forward to personal encounters with the Mumbai "American Center" circle, wherever you live.

Our theme this month is "literacy." Once the privilege of a few, literacy now enriches the lives of billions. Just as stone, then metal, tools gave early humans new lifestyles ages ago, today's verbal tools open doors to the modern economy and connections with fellow citizens around the world. Is literacy necessary for a fulfilled life? Not always. Rich oral traditions have sustained thriving societies. Modern economies, though, rely heavily on literacy. Might new audio and video communications replace reading and writing? Time will tell. In the near term, though, literacy holds the keys to jobs, commerce, social development and quality of life for hundreds of millions of the world's citizens. All of us benefit from widening the circle of the literate. Enjoy reading!

With warm regards,



Elizabeth Kauffman
Director

(Continued from page 1)

- A family may need to get to the emergency room in a hospital by using personal transportation, or the public transit system
- A person may need to order a prescription through a pharmacy's automated answering service. This would require access to a touch-tone phone, the ability to understand the language in which the information is given, and familiarity with entering information through a touch-tone phone service
- Individuals may be able to go to the supermarket and recognize products that they wish to purchase and the aisle where the products are located
- Other individuals may be able to recognize household cleaning products that are safe to individuals or the environment
- A person may be able to recognize plants and animals that are safe to consume in the wilderness, and how to prepare them
- People may find treatment for a specific health condition by locating a specialist in a highly bureaucratic and complicated healthcare maze
- A person may seek nontraditional health services from a healer of a particular culture rather than from an allopathic doctor

The Health & Literacy Special Collection which comprises a quick reference guide to health literacy, its impact on health outcomes, and strategies to prepare appropriate educational material, is available online at <http://healthliteracy.worlded.org/facts.htm>. The Health & Literacy Special Collection is created, compiled, and updated by World Education with support from the U.S. National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and their LINC Project.

Education Reforms in the U.S.: No Child Left Behind Act

America has experimented with education reforms and ways to increase literacy in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Here are some of the

salient features and a brief success report of the NCLB Act.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, a historic education reform based on:

- Stronger accountability for results
- More freedom for states and communities
- Encouraging proven education methods
- More choices for parents

Under the Act's accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. They must produce annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress. Schools that do not make progress must provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance; take corrective action; and, if still not making adequate yearly progress after five years, make dramatic changes to the way the school is run.

A Commitment to Community Colleges

Community colleges make great training providers because they are affordable, accessible, and perhaps most important, adaptable. Community colleges are able to track changing local labor conditions and partner with local employers to provide training geared toward the jobs that are in demand.

One of the hallmarks of a strong economy is labor market flexibility. When workers can move relatively freely from job to job and place to place following the rhythms of the marketplace, businesses have the workers they need to do the job and workers have opportunities for career advancement. Community colleges, as flexible training providers, help make the U.S. workforce and the U.S. economy more competitive.

In his 2004 State of the Union address, the President proposed "increasing our support for America's fine community colleges, so they can ... train workers for industries that are creating the most new jobs." This commitment has been supported by \$125 million in 2005 and 2006 for the Community-based Job Training Grants program to provide training for 100,000 workers. The President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget supports these efforts with a \$150 million request, which would provide training for 160,000 workers.

Under the Act, states and school districts have unprecedented flexibility in how they use federal education funds, in exchange for greater accountability for results. It is possible for most school districts to transfer up to 50 percent of the federal formula grant funds they receive under the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants, Educational Technology, Innovative Programs, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs to any one of these programs, or to their Title I program, without separate approval. This allows districts to use funds for their particular needs, such as hiring new teachers, increasing teacher pay, and improving teacher training and professional development. Similarly, the law's consolidation of bilingual education programs gives states and districts

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

more control in planning programs to benefit all limited English-proficient students.

A new demonstration program allows selected states and school districts to consolidate funds received under a variety of federal education programs so that they can be used for any educational purpose authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the NCLB Act in order to assist them in making adequate yearly progress and narrowing achievement gaps. In addition, the new Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program gives states and districts greater flexibility to choose the professional development strategies for teachers that best meet their needs to help raise student achievement.

The NCLB Act puts special emphasis on determining what educational programs and practices have been proven effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding is targeted to support these programs and teaching methods that work to improve student learning and achievement. Reading programs are an example. The law supports scientifically based reading instruction programs in the early grades under the new Reading First program and in preschool under the new Early Reading First program. Funds are available to help teachers strengthen current skills and gain new ones in effective reading instructional techniques.

The Act also provides new education options for many families. This federal law allows parents to choose other public schools or take advantage of free tutoring if their child attends a school that needs improvement. Also, parents can choose another public school if the school their child attends is unsafe. The law also supports the growth of more independent charter schools, funds some services for children in private schools, and provides certain protection for home-schooling parents. Finally, it requires that states and local school districts provide information to help parents make informed educational choices for their child.

The Act is Working

Multiple studies and reports show that student achievement is rising across America as a result of the NCLB Act. The long-term Nation's Report Card results, released in July 2005, showed elementary school student achievement in reading and math at an all-time high and the achievement gap closing. It showed more progress was made by nine-year-olds in reading in the last five years than in the previous 28 years combined.

America's nine-year-olds posted the best scores in reading (since 1971) and math (since 1973) in the history of the report. America's 13-year-olds earned the highest math scores the test ever recorded. The Nation's Report Card Trial Urban District Assessment, released in December 2005, showed students in select urban school districts improving faster than their peers nationwide over the last two years.

Today we celebrate literacy as a value closely linked to basic human dignity and full civic participation in one's country and in the world. Literacy is also a vital means for securing other benefits and achieving other goals. Touching every aspect of our lives and also the lives of those around us, literacy is truly both achievable and transformative. This is our message on International Literacy Day 2006.

— Sanjay Mehta, Editor

The American Center acknowledges the following web sites in compiling the essay:

<http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/FamilyLit/whatis.html>
<http://www.lincs.worlded.org/muro.htm>
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/aci/index.html#section6>

NOTES FROM THE AIRC

A Select Webliography on Literacy

<http://www.altn.org/>
Adult Literacy & Technology Network

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=olos>
American Library Association – Literacy & Outreach Services

http://www.astd.org/astd/education/about_education
American Society for Training and Development – Education

<http://www.americorps.org/>
Corporation for National & Community Service – AmeriCorps

<http://www.literacydirectory.org/>
America's Literacy Directory – A Service of the National Institute for Literacy and Partners

<http://www.aalpd.org/>
Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers

<http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com/>
The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy

http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/adult_literacy.jsp
Brooklyn Public Library – Adult Literacy

<http://www.caalusa.org/>
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

http://www.firstgov.gov/Citizen/Topics/Education_Training.shtml
FirstGov.gov – Education and Training

<http://www.dtae.org/adultlit/menu.html>
Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education – Office of Adult Literacy

<http://www.loc.gov/literacy/>
The Library of Congress – Lifelong Literacy

http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/directories/state_local.html
Literacy Information and Communication System – State and Local Directories – A Service of the National Institute for Literacy

<http://www.literacyonline.org/>
Literacy.org

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/>
The National Academies

<http://www.nald.ca/litweb/internat/usa.htm>
National Adult Literacy Database

<http://nces.ed.gov/>
Institute of Education Sciences – National Center for Education Statistics

<http://www.ncsall.net/>
National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

<http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/>
National Coalition For Literacy

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/services-literacy-programs.html>
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development – Family Literacy Programs

Note: Internet sites included in this listing, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.

MUMBAI MONDAYS

**A Discussion on
The American Electoral System – How Do We Elect the People
Who Run Our Country?
led by Larry Woodruff**

**Monday, September 18
American Center Auditorium**

6:00 p.m.

Larry Woodruff will discuss the U.S. political system, giving special attention to the upcoming midterm elections in November that will determine control of both the upper and lower Houses of the U.S. Congress. He will also discuss the process of electing a U.S. President, starting with primaries, continuing on to the national conventions of the major political parties and proceeding to the General Election in November 2008 that will determine who President George W. Bush's successor will be.

Larry Woodruff is a native-born Iowan who joined the Foreign Service at age 21 and officially retired in 1996 at age 40. Before retirement, he had six foreign assignments and one assignment in Washington, D.C. After retirement, he has continued to work six months per year in Consular Sections at U.S. Foreign Service posts. Mr. Woodruff has had 30 assignments in Asia, South America and Africa. He previously served in Mumbai in 2004 for seven weeks and liked it so much that he has returned for another posting.

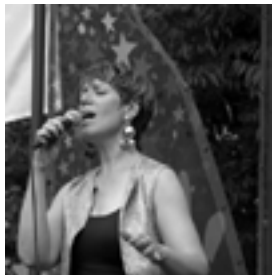
CONCERT

**An Evening with American Ghazal Singer
Paula Jeanine**

Accompanied by artists on Tabla, Sarangi and Harmonium

**Friday, September 8
American Center Auditorium**

6:00 p.m.



"American Ghazal" is the concept of New York vocalist/percussionist/lyricist and composer Paula Jeanine. Using the traditional South Asian musical forms of ghazal, thumri and raga, Jeanine writes and performs material with a modern sound from an ancient source. A true American thinker, Jeanine has sought to overcome artistic boundaries in developing repertoire that suits her unique vocal colors and poetic direction.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Paula Jeanine was raised in a jazz household, as the daughter of June Evinger, a former singer with the Emerson Gill Orchestra. She honed her musical skills further with mentor Bill Gidney, who had been the regional pianist for Billie Holiday.

This summer, Jeanine was chosen to be one of the Voices for Peace at the World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan.

**Edited and designed by Sanjay Mehta and Lalita Bhavnani
Copy edited by Eva Doctor**

Printed by Colorpoint, S. J. Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013

FILMS THIS MONTH

LITERACY

Friday, September 15 ***Dangerous Minds*** (1995, color, 99 mins)

Wednesday, September 20 ***Dead Poets Society*** (1989, color, 129 mins)

Friday, September 22 ***Good Will Hunting*** (1997, color, 126 mins)

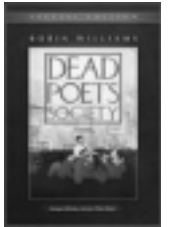
American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m. each day



Dangerous Minds is a compelling true story starring Michelle Pfeiffer as Louanne Johnson, a hard-nosed ex-Marine who takes a job teaching English to smart but underachieving kids in an inner-city school. Pfeiffer draws on her background to educate the kids on topics ranging from martial arts to the poetry of Dylan Thomas while battling gang members and a strict principal. George Dzundza costars.

Robin Williams turns in a dynamic, Oscar-nominated performance as a literature teacher whose unorthodox methods inspire his students and upset the administration at a boys' boarding school. *Dead Poets Society* is directed by Peter Weir and costars Ethan Hawke, Robert Sean Leonard and Norman Lloyd.



In *Good Will Hunting* real-life pals Matt Damon and Ben Affleck took home an Academy Award for their story about Will Hunting (Damon), a janitor at MIT whose sullen nature masks a genius intellect. Affleck costars as his best friend, Minnie Driver is a medical student who falls for Damon, and Best Supporting Actor Oscar-winner Robin Williams is a therapist who tries to help him come to grips with his life.

AMERICAN ROAD SHOW IN RAIPUR

The American Center is reaching out to the people of Chhattisgarh. From September 12-15, 2006, staff will be showcasing some of the Center's activities at the TOWN HALL in Raipur. We will be displaying resources including books, periodicals, videos, DVDs and thematic posters on social sciences and the humanities, business and economics, environment, law and legislation and life and culture in the United States. There will be lectures, discussions and presentations by invited Indian experts on issues such as disaster management, the Freedom of Information Act, civic participation by youth, undergraduate education in the U.S. and English-language learning. We have organized special presentations by experienced colleagues on U.S. higher education and visas. The event is in collaboration with the Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur.

EVERYONE IS INVITED TO ATTEND

Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Please bring the envelope containing this issue of the bulletin for admission (maximum two persons). The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.